

**TITLE:** Cooperative Interagency Electronic Fishery Information Collection In Alaska

**AUTHOR:** Cooperative Interagency Electronic Reporting Steering Committee

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**OBJECTIVE:** Provide an overview of the ongoing development of the Cooperative Interagency Electronic Fishery Information Collection Program in Alaska. This presentation will focus on the interagency program structure and the development strategies to implement this program within an unyielding production deadline.

**ABSTRACT:**

The commercial fisheries off-shore of Alaska led all states in both volume of landed seafood product, and value of that product. Three agencies are involved in the management of Alaska fisheries, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), the National Marine Fisheries Service – Alaska Region (NMFS-AK), and the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), and each are tasked with ensuring the sustainability of the resource.

Inseason management of individual fisheries is based on data from multiple sources, a major portion of which is harvest documentation provided by commercial seafood product landing and production reports. Co-mingled management authority for these fisheries have created redundant and fragmented reporting.

Beginning in 1999, representatives of each of the fisheries management agencies met to address consolidated fisheries data collection and formed a program steering committee the following year. Our partner in this interagency data collection program is the Pacific States Marine Fishery Commission. The project goals and standards for this initiative are as follows:

- Collect timely commercial catch statistics that meet the needs of agencies tasked with oversight, management and enforcement;
- Reduce redundant reporting from the seafood industry;
- Develop a data collection system that considers the business constraints of industry;
- Improve data quality;
- Joint multiple landing documents and reports by a unique trip number;
- Adhere to regulations and confidentiality requirements;
- Provide paper documentation to stakeholders, as required.

To date, the agencies have completed a needs analysis and technology assessment, to determine the feasibility of the proposed program, and to provide recommendations on development of this interagency data collection system. The needs analysis examined the business rules and data elements required by each participating agency. The technology demonstrator determined if the communications infrastructure in Alaska was sufficient to support web-based electronic reporting. Using an information technology consultant, a web application was developed to simulate the communications and processing bandwidth needed for the proposed electronic reporting system. This technology demonstration determined that most geographic areas that provide internet access could accommodate electronic reporting, but not all. A variety of data input strategies will be required to fully address electronic data collection.

This interagency data collection project has an unusually high number of stakeholders, with individual authorities and oversight structures. The steering committee realized that for this project to succeed, an interagency framework and program structure would be required for the successful implementation and long-term management of the project. The steering committee worked with agency directors to develop a cooperative agreement.

With preliminary analysis completed, the steering committee established a staged implement plan, which was revised to accommodate rapid implementation of Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands crab fisheries to meet the reporting requirements of the federal Crab Rationalization program. Once implemented, the program will encompass state and federal groundfish reporting, statewide. July 9, 2004, the steering committee selected a contractor to develop and deploy the envisioned system within a one-year timeframe.